

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TODAY**

**PART 7: POWER AND CONTROL**

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## VICTIM EXPERIENCES

### A. Victim Scenarios

Victims of partner violence are typically also subjected to emotional and sexual abuse, threats of violence, economic control, and efforts to isolate them socially - the latter tactics often related to pathological jealousy. When they attempt to leave the relationship, victims may be stalked. These tactics are outlined above in the well-known power and control “wheel” (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Although it assumes that victims are female and perpetrators male, a gender-inclusive wheel may easily be formulated by simply adding the appropriate pronouns, “she” and “her,” and by adding other tactics such as withdrawal of affection, intrusive talk (e.g., at 2:00 a.m.), and manipulation of the legal system. Later, we will see that there are indeed some gender differences in how these tactics are used

The following accounts, by Walker (1979), Jacobsen & Gottman (1998), Cook (1997) and Shupe, et al (1987), illustrate the ways that control can be exercised without the actual use of physical violence:

I couldn't have any friends at work except those I could talk to between the jobs I had to do during the day. I never could have lunch with a friend or go out for a drink after work. Bob was always there...One night, we had a party and I invited all of our neighbors. It was Bob's idea...Toward the end of the evening, two men who shared an apartment together came in and we offered them some drinks. I went into the kitchen to get some ice and fix their drinks, and one of them came in with me to help me. We were only a few minutes, but when we came out, Bob started screaming at me that it took me too long, that I was really having oral sex with this guy in the kitchen (Walker, 1979, pp.116-117)

She made all the decisions, about everything. She would decide how and where to spend money, what discipline there would be for the children, when we would make love, just everything. After a while, I began to view my own opinions as wrong...Why bother, was my attitude. It just go that way after so many years. She could constantly contradict me, especially in front of the children...I would make a decision, say about not having any TV because homework wasn't done, that kind of thing, and she would find out about it, and then overturn it, saying they could have TV (Cook, 1997, p 55)

Of course, becoming pregnant and having another baby meant that I had to give up my job, and that was the end of my economic independence and my freedom for the next few years...It didn't take too long for Ben to find a job. It also became clear to me that I was bored at home. I loved working, but Ben wouldn't let me work. It would just be the scene for another argument and another fight (Walker, 1979, p. 143)

She would make a lot of long-distance phone calls, up to four hundred dollars a month. I would question her about this, explain how we couldn't afford it, but she just ignored me. My birthday present each year was the opportunity to have sex; otherwise, it was completely refused. I gave up trying, really...(Cook, 1997, p. 56)

I remember once wanting to play bridge with a woman I had met. She was the wife of another officer, and we had children the same age; in fact, we had a whole lot in common. We began to play bridge together, and we would see each other socially, until one day my husband told me that I could no longer see her. I couldn't understand it until he explained that he had been getting a lot of complaints from his commanding officer that I was spending too much time with her. Her husband was much further down the military social ladder than my husband was, so I wasn't allowed to be friends with her. The only women that I was allowed to be friends with were women I could not share things with (Walker, 1979, p. 169)

His partner...had seen her mother abuse her father. Ursula approached her lover the same way. She called him "cock sucker" and "prick." She chose what clothes he could wear to work, arguing that certain ties or shirts would attract his female colleagues. If he disregarded her choices, he came to find his wardrobe burned to ashes. She insisted...that he couldn't go out with his friends. If he did, she locked him out of the house for the night. He wasn't permitted to read the *Toronto Sun*, because the tabloid carries daily photos of a woman in a bikini - the "Sunshine Girl" - and that was evidence that he lusted after other women. When she started a fight, she would follow him from room to room in their house, keeping up all night: "I'm not *finished* with you!" Exhausted, he came late to work too many times and got fired (Shupe, et al, 1987, p. 124)

Many battered women are subjected to demeaning, often terrifying, incidents of sexual abuse:

He would tie me whenever we had sex to a bed or a chair or whatever. Sometimes he would force me to suck him and would stick his penis in my mouth all the time. Sometimes he would tie me and turn me around facing the other way and would have anal sex with me. He ripped my rectum so many times that the doctors in the emergency room used to laugh when I'd walk in...He would stick all kinds of things in my vagina, like the crucifix with the picture of Jesus on it. One time he took a whole bunch of St. Christopher medals to see how many he could get in at one time (Walker, 1979, p. 121)

Thanks to the valiant efforts of the shelter movement and its allies, the legal system no longer ignores the plight of battered women as it once did. Unfortunately, some women manipulate the new laws to their advantage:

Jerry is a 34-year old construction contractor who recently went to court for the tenth time on an assault charge brought against him by his ex-wife. On each charge he has

pleaded not guilty, and each time his wife has failed to show up at the trial, therefore the charges against him have been dropped. But each time nevertheless he has had to hire a lawyer, taken time off from his job, and spent many hours trying to explain to his current girlfriend that he has not been violent against his ex-wife...He no longer knows what to do. He has been to the police department and has been told that there is nothing they can do. She can file whatever charges against him she wants...

He has been divorced from his wife for about a year and a half. It was a bitter divorce with a child custody case that he won. His ex-wife told him repeatedly that she would make life miserable for him and eventually would get the children from him. Jerry once told the counselor when speaking about her, "You want to see violence? I'll show you violence!" He showed a recent cut on his forearm. "This is what she did the last time she got angry with me" (Shupe, et al., 1987, pp. 54-55)

Any one who have worked with severely abused women will agree that emotional abuse and the use of coercive control are as damaging, if not more so, than the physical assaults themselves, but are particularly damaging when the two occur together. Jacobsen & Gottman (1998) write:

Although not all men who abuse their wives emotionally are batterers, virtually all batterers also abuse their wives emotionally. They do so by verbal threats, intimidating actions such as destruction of pets or property, humiliating and degrading remarks directed towards their partners, and attempts to rob their partner of their autonomy as human beings...Once a woman has been battered, and violence has been established as a method of control, emotional abuse can be especially frightening and controlling...Emotional abuse can act as a proxy for physical abuse by reminding battered women that they can be beaten at any time (pp. 22-23)

Male victims report similar experiences:

She was very controlling...She decided how money was to be spent, where we'd go, who we'd see, who our friends should be. I couldn't do anything right; it didn't matter what it was...I worked my butt off to try and keep her satisfied. No matter what I did, doing the dishes, cleaning, child care, it was wrong...She took everything that I could give and threw it back in my face. It was very painful. It was far more painful than the physical abuse. I could handle myself there; it just added to the overall sense of things, kept things on edge, because I never knew for sure when it might escalate into that, too (Cook, 1997, p. 58)

In referring to physical assaults, the man says: "I could handle myself there." This, of course, may be another example of men's tendency to minimize feelings. We have also seen how women can terrify their male victims by assaulting when they are drunk or asleep, sometimes causing grave physical injuries. Nonetheless, it is clear that the combination of

violence and emotional/controlling abuse in severe types of battering is different for women, due to the more immediate possibility of injury. For this reason, threats of violence can be especially damaging. And it appears that men use such threats more often than women in battering relationships

A recent study by Felson & Messner (2000) analyzed the National Crime Victim Survey for the years 1992 through 1994. Of the 2,597 cases involving a single assailant on a single victim, 22.7% of the antagonists were comprised of an intimate couple. Physical assaults were preceded by a verbal threat most often in cases of male-on-female abuse (54.6%), followed by female-on-female lesbian abuse (33.5%), female-on-male (27%) and, lastly, male-on-male gay abuse (18.2%)

B. Scenarios of Abuse and Control: Which is Worse?

1. You are referred to as a “whore”  
*Or:* You are kept awake between 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. by a partner who insists that they want to “finish the discussion”
2. Someone threatens to leave you and never let you see your children again  
*Or:* Someone threatens to harm you physically
3. Your partner won’t give you grocery money  
*Or:* Partner spends the family income recklessly, ruining your credit and forcing you into bankruptcy
4. Your partner isolates you from the family by turning the children against you  
*Or:* Partner isolates you by refusing to let you get a job outside the home
5. For a woman to be called a “slut”  
*Or:* For a man to be called a “loser”
6. Being emotionally shut out of your partner’s life  
*Or:* Being pressured into having sex
7. Regularly being questioned about your whereabouts  
*Or:* Partner calls your boss and tells them you’re “abusive” and that you do drugs
8. Your ex calls you every 30 minutes, and shows up at your job site to harass you  
*Or:* On the road, you and your new boyfriend are followed by your ex

## ABUSE/CONTROL TACTICS: WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

There is a dearth of quantitative data in the literature on emotional and sexual abuse and control tactics. Studies that look at abusers and victims of both sexes are particularly lacking. We now look at this existing research, on stalking, sexual coercion, verbal/emotional abuse, and the various types of control tactics

### Stalking

- According to the NVAWS (Tjaden, et al., 1998-b), 0.2% of men are stalked each year by a current or former intimate, and 0.5% of women, a ratio of two-and-a-half women for each man victimized. Unlike the NVAWS, most other studies drawn from community samples do not frame the questions within the context of a crime survey, and they generally indicate much more comparable rates, depending on how “stalking” is defined
- Sptizberg and Rhea (1999) examined a variety of stalking subtypes, collectively known as obsessive relational intrusion (ORI). Results from their sample of college students in Texas revealed a 54% rate of male-perpetrated ORI's, versus 46% for females
- Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al's (2000) college survey asked respondents to report on their own ORI behavior, as well as incidents of victimization. There were no overall differences in stalking rates. “As a whole,” the authors write, “these results suggest that unwanted pursuit behaviors may occur in a relatively gender-neutral manner” (p. 86)
- A major difference between the sexes was that men made more unwanted visits to homes and apartments, whereas women left the greater share of unwanted phone messages. Women were also four times as likely to report having been physically threatened. Davis and Frieze (2000) echo these findings. Considering that women are both injured and murdered twice as often as men, it is not surprising that they report higher degrees of fear, and seek the vast majority of protective orders in stalking cases

### Unwanted Sexual Behavior

- In the NVAWS (Tjaden, et al., 1998-a), only .0375% of the men reported to having been raped the previous year by a current or former intimate partner. Five times as many women (0.2%) said that this had happened to them. As

with stalking rates, however, rates for coercive sexual behaviors narrow considerably between the sexes when an expanded definition is employed, and when the interview is not framed within the context of a crime survey

- Muehlenhard and Cook's (1988) college study revealed that men, more often than women, engage in unwanted sexual intercourse, at rates of 63% versus 46%. Being taken advantage of when intoxicated was reported by 30.8% of the men, and 21.0% of the women. 13.4% of the men and 11.5% of the women said they had been verbally coerced. The rates were 5.7% for men subjected to nonviolent coercion (e.g., blocking the door), compared with 5.4% for the women. Coercion involving physical assaults (e.g., slapping, punching) was experienced by 1.4% of the men and 2.7% of the women
- A later study by Waldner-Haugrud and Magruder (1995) asked a similar population about a range of coercive tactics. In the previous year, the men had an average of 2.26 incidents perpetrated upon them, and the women 2.86. Persistent touching was common, reported by 51% of males and 70% of females. Men were twice as likely to report blackmail (8.5% versus 4.2%); women reported a higher incidence of manipulative guilt (30.1% versus 22.5%). With respect to physical coercion, the women were twice as likely than men to be restrained or detained, and more threatened with physical force (6.9% to 6.0%). However, three times more men than women had weapons used against them (4.5% versus 1.4%)

### Verbal/Emotional Abuse and Control Tactics

- In the first NFVS (Straus, et al., 1980), the average adult was found to have verbally assaulted his/her partner an average of 4 times per year. Women were found to have engaged in a somewhat higher degree of yelling and swearing than men, and to have smashed or broken things more often
- As mentioned in a previous section, Michael Johnson (2000-a) has developed a typology of partner violence that includes emotional abuse and control tactics. From his initial sample, Johnson determined that the 10% of violent individuals who perpetrate the most violent assaults is also the group that engages in emotionally abusive behavior and coercive control. Men were found to comprise 97% of individuals in this group. However, the study was limited by its use of only female respondents, heavily drawn from crime victim samples. In a second study, Johnson (2000-b) analyzed data from the 1998 NVAWS, and determined 35% of male-perpetrated partner

violence to be “intimate terrorism.” Again, Johnson focused exclusively on female reports; in fact, among the many thick volumes of published data from the NVAWS, there is no data available on how the men answered the seven questions regarding control tactics used against *them*

- In a study by Swan and Snow (2002), 108 women who had recently assaulted their partners were questioned about their abuse experiences. Although the women admitted to having been more physically assaultive, and more emotionally abusive, than their partners, they indicated that the men used isolation-type control tactics 75% more often than they did. From this, the authors nonetheless determined that only 12% of these women were the aggressors, a conclusion drawn from having accorded equal weight to the control tactics and acts of physical violence

The authors acknowledge that the instrument used to gauge coercive control, the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1999), was designed to measure men’s behaviors (e.g., “get upset if housework was not done when you wanted,” and “demand partner stay home and take care of the children”), and recommend that a scale particular to women’s violence was needed. Despite this caution, they nevertheless maintain that the women were victims of abuse at a rate three times that of men. Women who assaulted and emotionally abused their mates were deemed “violent resisters” to male abuse. Self-defense is assumed, even though the women weren’t asked about it during the interview process

- In a survey of men in a batterer treatment program (Shupe, et al, 1987),

Two-thirds reported that their mates regularly went through their pockets and billfolds, not so much looking for money as for telephone numbers of possible girlfriends

Three fourths said the women closely clocked them while they were outside the home

One-third of the women tried to censor the men’s telephone calls and other communications with family and friends

Two-thirds said the women withdrew sex as punishment when they resisted being monitored or misbehaved somehow (p. 59)

- An early study that sampled both men and women was conducted by Kasian & Painter (1992). Using a gender-inclusive version of the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory, they investigated emotional abuse/

controlling behavior in a population of 1, 625 college students. Below are the categories of abuse, and the most statistically significant items in each:

Isolation and emotional control

My partner tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family  
My partner tried to turn my family and friends against me  
My partner tried to keep me from doing things to help myself  
My partner interfered in my relationship with family members  
My partner threatened to have an affair with someone else

Diminishment of self-esteem

My partner treated me like I was stupid  
My partner treated me like I was an inferior  
My partner ordered me around  
My partner treated me like his/her personal servant  
My partner insulted or shamed me in front of others

Jealousy

My partner was jealous and suspicious of my friends  
My partner was jealous of other men/women  
My partner monitored my time and made me account for my whereabouts  
My partner accused me of seeing another man/woman

Verbal abuse

My partner swore at me  
My partner yelled and screamed at me  
My partner called me names

Withdrawal

My partner sulked and refused to talk about a problem  
My partner withheld affection from me  
My partner gave me the silent treatment

The men reported a higher frequency of such abuse upon them than did the women, for the following categories: isolation and emotional control, jealousy, verbal abuse and withdrawal. Men and women were subjected to equal amounts of diminishment of self-esteem

The best predictor of a victim terminating an abusive relationship was not a high rate of such behaviors, but rather a low rate of *positive* behaviors. This

finding appears to corroborate those of Walker (1979) and Dutton (1998), that batterers, when not violent or emotionally abusive, can be especially charming and remorseful, showering their victims with gifts and attention

- In a survey college students using the revised version of the conflict tactics scale, or CTS-2 (Straus, 2001), the men reported to have used psychological aggression on their partner an average of 15.1 times in the year. The women said they had done this to their men an average of 16.0. Psychological aggression was defined as verbal abuse (swearing, calling partner “fat or ugly,” accusing partner of being a “lousy lover”), threats of physical harm, and symbolic abuse (destroying something belonging to partner)
- Because of the restricted nature of each sample, how much these last two studies can generalize to a larger population of abusive adults is open to debate. Graham-Kevan and Archer (2002), using a more diverse sample, collected data from shelter women (n = 43), male prisoners (n = 108) and students of both sexes (n = 113). Each respondent was asked about physical violence and control tactics, as used by themselves and by their partners. Control tactics were measured on the 24-item Controlling Behavior Scale, divided into five sub-categories from the “Power and Control Wheel”: “using economic abuse,” “using coercion or threats,” “using intimidation,” “using emotional abuse,” and “using isolation.” Results showed a significant, positive relationship between control tactics and physical aggression, for both sexes - and the strength of the correlation was the same for men and women. Intimidation was the most significant predictor of aggression for men, and the best predictor of female aggression, as well

Although the levels of control and physical aggression were higher overall among the shelter women’s male partners (“intimate terrorists”), compared to the college students (“common couple violence”), use of control was strongly associated with aggression in both groups

- Ann Coker and her colleagues (Coker et al., 2002) re-analyzed the data from the NVAWS and, unlike Michael Johnson, examined what both the female and *male* respondents said about their experiences of being emotionally abused and controlled. Of the 8,000 women, 6.9% indicated that they had ever been subjected to abuse of power and control by an intimate partner, and 5.2% indicated that they had ever been verbally abused. Of the 8,000 men, the percentages were 6.8% and 10.5%, respectively.

## CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE TACTICS

*The following list gives examples for each of the 10 categories of the “Intimate Partner Abuse and Control Wheel,” depicted elsewhere on the FAVTEA website. Contact the author, John Hamel, LCSW, for a copy of the CAT (Controlling and Abusive Tactics Questionnaire).*

1. Threats and Intimidation - Verbally threaten to hurt partner, or intimidate with gestures (e.g., staring.) Harm pets. Threaten to harm someone partner cares about.
2. Isolation and Jealousy - Attempt to control who partner spends time with. Restrict their movements, keep them from leaving (for example, by standing in front of the door). Withhold car keys, disable their vehicle. Accuse of being unfaithful or of flirting with others. Check up on partner, interrogate about where they've been.
3. Economic Abuse - Control the money, exclude partner from financial decisions. Or spend money excessively, refuse to work or contribute financially. Threaten to have partner fired. Lie about expenses, to get more child support.
4. Diminishment of Self-Esteem - Tell partner they are unattractive, call them names (for example, “bitch,” “loser,”) make fun of their sexual performance. Threaten to have an affair. Humiliate in front of others, pressure them to do things against their values. Ridicule, treat partner like he/she is stupid, or tell them they are incompetent and helpless. Tell them that what they want or care about is unimportant. Spread false rumors about partner, or try to convince others that partner is crazy. Blame him/her for problems in relationship.
5. General Control - Order partner around, expect them to “hop to it.” Nag, refuse to take “no” for an answer. Follow them around, criticizing their every move. Insist on talking late at night, keeping them awake.
6. Obsessive Relational Intrusion - Call or go to partner's place of employment to harass them. Follow them around. Page constantly or leave numerous unwanted messages on their voice mail.
7. Passive-Aggressiveness and Withdrawal - Threaten to harm myself to get attention. Deliberately ignore partner, or withhold affection or sex to punish them. Lock out of bedroom when angry. Refuse to cooperate. Act in a

“passive-aggressive” manner - for example, “forgetting” to pay a bill or to give them some important information.

8. Using Children - Tell the children negative things about partner, or use them as spies. Exclude partner from child-rearing, or join with them against him/her. Threaten to take the children or keep them from partner. Refuse to allow the children to see their grandparents.
9. Legal System Abuse - File false or exaggerated domestic violence charges or false child abuse charges. Threaten to have partner deported, or to report them to welfare.
10. Sexual Coercion - Pressure partner to have sex when they don't want to, or to engage in sexual practices they are uncomfortable with. Physically force sex (rape.)

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